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THE CINEMA AS A MORAL LEVELLER

THE cinema is a much more momentous invention than printing was. Before printing could affect you, you had to learn to read; and until 1870 you mostly had not learned to read. But even when you had, reading was not really a practical business for a manual laborer. Ask any man who has done eight or ten hours' heavy manual labor what happens to him when he takes up a book. He will tell you that he falls asleep in less than two minutes. Now, the cinema tells its story to the illiterate as well as to the literate; and it keeps its victim (if you like to call him so) not only awake but fascinated as if by a serpent's eye. And that is why the cinema is going to produce effects that all the cheap books in the world could never produce.

The cinema is cheap. For a halfpenny a boy is allowed to enter and sit out three films. For a penny he can stay the whole way through the entertainment. Not, of course, at the fashionable West End cinemas, but in the poorer districts, where all cinemas fill up their vacant seats in this fashion. The penny is often very well spent indeed. Take the not uncommon case of a child whose mother is out at work until late in the evening. To keep him out of mischief whilst she is away, she can either lock him in or lock him out. Usually she locks him out, preferring that the risk of his doing mischief and stealing food should be borne by other people. To a boy so situated the hospitality of a warm picture theatre with an exciting entertainment is priceless; and the work of begging the necessary penny is an occupation whilst the condition of pennilessness lasts. The people who are agitating to have children excluded from these theatres (they have actually succeeded in some towns in Germany) should be executed without pity. As to the magistrates who bind boys over not to go to the cinema, an intelligent Home Secretary would ask them whether it had ever occurred to them to consider the alternatives open to the boy: loafing at the street corner, for instance. As it is——

Nevertheless these people are not wrong in regarding the question of the morality inculcated by the cinema as enormously important. The cinema is going to form the mind of England. The national conscience, the national ideals and tests of conduct, will be those of the film. And the way in which the question is being tackled is very characteristic of our public life. Certain people who have never been inside a picture palace are alarmed at the hideous immorality of the film plays, and are calling out for a censorship and for the exclusion of children under sixteen. Certain others, who, like myself, frequent the cinemas, testify to their desolating romantic morality, and ridicule the moral scare. And between the ignorant meddlesomeness of the one party and the *laissez-faire* of the other nothing sensible is likely to be done.

What neither of them sees is that the danger of the cinema is not the danger of immorality, but of morality. The cinema must be not merely ordinarily and locally moral, but extraordinarily and internationally moral. A film must go round the world unchallenged if the maximum of profit is to be made from it. Ordinary theatres in London and Paris can specialize in pornographic farce because the relatively small class which tolerates and likes this sort of entertainment is numerous enough in huge cities to support one theatre. Such farces, if they go to the provinces, have to be bowdlerized either by omitting the objectionable passages or slurring them over. But a film cannot be bowdlerized: it must be as suitable for Clapham and Canterbury as for Leicester Square.

The result may be studied at any picture palace. You have what an agricultural laborer thinks right and what an old-fashioned governess thinks properly sentimental. The melodramas are more platitudinous than melodrama has ever been before. The farces, more crudely knockabout than any harlequinade ever enacted by living performers, are redeemed only by the fantastic impossibilities which the trickery of the film makes practicable. There is no comedy, no wit, no criticism of morals by ridicule or otherwise, no exposure of the unpleasant consequences of romantic sentimentality and reckless tomfoolery in real life, nothing that could give a disagreeable shock to the stupid or shake the self-complacency of the smug. In the early days

of the cinematograph, when it was a scarce and expensive curiosity, some of the films were clever and witty. All that is gone now. The levelling down has been thoroughly accomplished. The London boy is given the morality of the mining camp; and the Chinese pirate has to accept with reverence the proprieties of our cathedral towns.

Now levelling, though excellent in income, is disastrous in morals. The moment you allow one man to receive a larger income than another you are on the road to ruin. But the moment you prevent one man having a more advanced morality than another you are on the same road. And here we are not concerned with the question of teaching the London boy the criticisms of current morality made by Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Strindberg, by Barker, Brieux, Galsworthy, Hankin, and self (pardon the popular phrase), nor the philosophy of Bergson. These authors would not be popular with children in any case. But it is quite a mistake to suppose that conventional morality is all of one piece the world over. London cannot live on the morals of the Italian peasant or the Australian sheep-farmer. What is more, high civilization is not compatible with the romance of the pioneer communities of Canada. Yet Commercialism forces such morals on the cinema.

The moral is, of course, that the State should endow the cinema, as it should endow all forms of art to the extent necessary to place its highest forms above the need for competition. The highest forms, like the lowest, are necessarily immoral because the morals of the community are simply its habits, good and bad; and the highest habits, like the lowest, are not attained to by enough people to make them general and therefore moral. Morality, in fact, is only popularity; and popular notions of virtuous conduct will no more keep a nation in the front rank of humanity than popular notions of science and art will keep it in the front rank of culture. Ragtimes are more moral than Beethoven's Symphonies; the *Marriage of Kitty* is more moral than any masterpiece of Euripides or Ibsen; Millais is more moral than Mantegna: that is why there is comparatively no money in Beethoven and Ibsen and Mantegna. The London boy can hear a little Beethoven occasionally from an L.C.C. band, and may see Mantegna's work in the National Gallery. Ibsen is to be heard cheaply (in Yiddish) at the Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel. But the nameless exponents of a world-wide vulgarity (vulgarity is another of the names of morality) have complete possession of the cinema.

Already there is a cry, if not a very loud one, for educational films, meaning, as far as my experience goes, something ending with a fight between an octopus and a lobster. I suggest that what is wanted is the endowment, either public or private, of a cinema theatre devoted wholly to the castigation by ridicule of current morality. Otherwise the next generation of Englishmen will no longer be English: they will represent a world-average of character and conduct, which means that they will have rather less virtue than is needed to run Lapland. I shall be happy to contribute a few sample scenarios.

G. B. S.

STAGE SETTING

It no doubt requires apology for one to write of the stage who has no taste for the theatre, but only for drama. It may be the effects of early training, for till I was my own master the theatre was forbidden; and in this case the usual effects of prohibition have not followed, and I never have succeeded in acquiring the taste for the theatre as such. My fondness for the drama takes me there, but always with hesitating steps and a fear of the peculiarly devastating disillusionment which the stage can and sometimes does contrive.

My attitude to the stage, then, is mainly negative. I ask of it not to interfere unduly with the drama, not to destroy the imaginative conviction which spoken words and gestures can create.

It seems to me easy to take almost everything for granted on the stage, provided there is nothing there to interfere with one's powers of make-believe. I can be in the Forest of Arden on the slightest hint if the players are good enough and the language fine enough. But if a scene-painter paints it for me with elaborate realism, I am at once in a London theatre irrevocably, and all illusion is at an end. But we must distinguish: some scenes can be realised without danger. They are the scenes, mostly of modern comedy, in which something like an actual reconstruction is possible. The master builder's office, for instance, can be actually realised; no loss of illusion takes place when I see an American roll-top desk in that scene, and nothing would be gained by adumbrating it in symbols. All that seems necessary in such scenes is not to make the realisation so elaborate or so carefully planned that it calls attention to itself any more than it would in real life.

As we recede from scenes of contemporary interiors in any direction realisation must, I take it, be correspondingly less complete and become more and more suggestive and abstract.

With eighteenth-century comedy, for instance, it is doubtless possible, with sufficient money, to make almost as exact a reconstruction as in the case of Ibsen or Shaw; but the comparative unfamiliarity of the dresses and furniture will tend to make them more emphatic, so that with great completeness we are likely to get even here the scene encroaching on the drama. We must have, then, enough suggestion of the eighteenth century to set the imagination in the right key, but not enough to fix our attention on the setting any more than is done in an Ibsen play. This will be in every case a matter of proportion and adjustment. But the aim should always be to let the spectator treat the setting with just the same nonchalant indifference and freedom from concern as he feels for contemporary surroundings. As we go back in time we must sacrifice more and more anything like historical accuracy to the purpose of creating this indifference and want of curiosity and interest.

But now suppose we travel away from the comedic atmosphere of contemporary life, not merely backwards in time, but outwards towards moods of lyric ecstasy or epic grandeur, the problem of staging becomes increasingly difficult. It becomes also much more important. It must still, I maintain, play a strictly subordinate rôle; it must remain in the penumbra of our consciousness; it must never fix our full attention. We must not go to the play for pictures. But it must act powerfully upon our general vague consciousness. It must affect our whole being without explicitly engaging our attention. It must do this, or rather help to do this, because, in such drama as we are considering, it is necessary for us to get away from all the associations of ordinary life into an unfamiliar world of unusual tension

and exaltation; and since the persons of the drama cannot move in empty space, since we must look at something, what we look at must not drag us back into the ordinary current of life, but must help to hold us suspended in an unfamiliar æther.

It is in the solution of this, the only really difficult problem of staging, that, I suspect, Gordon Craig has shown the way (though I, alas! have had to be content to look only at tiny models of his scenes) with his play of real space, real light and gloom, and his quite abstract adumbration of any particular objects. It is here, too, that the whole modern movement of art may help to score fresh triumphs through its power to get away from the associations of objects, its power to handle abstract conceptions of space and abstract relations of form, and, one may hope, ultimately to give by these means any desired tone to the general mental condition of the spectator without asking him to exercise anything but a passive receptivity.

I am aware that I may have misrepresented Mr. Gordon Craig's aims in what I have said above. I gather that he wants the scene, for all its simplification, to count for more, at any rate, than the words. It seems to me that he is making here for another form of art than drama. I can imagine that such a form, in which figures magnified by mask and cothurnus moved about in the vast abstract spaces which his scenery can create, would be singularly beautiful and impressive; but it will approximate rather to the dance than to drama as we know it. I have here confined myself to drama in which the spoken word must be the central focus of attention. There is no doubt that gesture can emphasise and amplify the effect of speech, and we should demand of scenery and costume that they should still further help out this effect in so far as they can, but, above all, that they should do nothing to hinder it.

The whole business of the stage depends, I suppose, on the assumption that we can receive two different sets of impressions at the same time—those from the voice and movement of the actors on the one hand, and the purely visual ones of the scene on the other—and that these two sets of impressions can be harmonised to a common end. I believe there are serious limitations to this power of co-ordination—limitations which have never been fully considered; but in any case it is to me quite certain that there must be strict subordination of one set of impressions to the other, and that this subordination is not always enforced. I would suggest, for instance, that when Sir Herbert Tree does Shakespeare as a costume play the actors should merely walk on like M. Poiret's mannequins. I feel sure that this would be the only way of appreciating the particular effect he aims at properly. I doubt whether Shakespeare's verse is not too emphatic in character to be treated as a mere stimulus to our visual impressions; while, on the other hand, no one could say that the dresses and scenery at His Majesty's can be forced into a subordinate position.

But it is not only on the stage itself that one's impressions are too varied, and that the appeals to one's attention are too many and too clamant. The traditional architecture and decoration of the theatre and proscenium can hardly be considered conducive to the concentrated passivity of appreciation. In a music hall this is well enough. There I like the plaster Caryatids, the rollicking Cupids, and all the gingerbread magnificence, just as there I can appreciate the sham oriental scenery before which the serio-comic lady declaims. Nor do I mind in that atmosphere how many sensations I receive, since I know that I may neglect any number without missing the point. But for drama I should like nothing but the stage to count. The theatre itself should be as decent, drab, and undemonstrative as possible—it may, and should, be beautiful, but only in that key. And here I may say that M. Jacques Copeau's newly founded Théâtre du Vieux Colombier fulfils almost all my demands. It is a long rectangular room, from every part of which the stage is perfectly seen. There is nothing in the theatre to attract attention; the walls are in plain panels of a buff colour without any decoration. The proscenium is a flattened arch painted black. Finally, in the plays which I have seen the treatment of the scenery has been admirable. In the case of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, for instance, an Elizabethan interior was contrived with some grey hangings, two high-backed chairs, and a gate-legged table. The costumes were sufficient to indicate the period, but attracted no attention, the general effect being almost in monochrome of greys, blacks, and whites. It seems to me probable that any striking or brilliant oppositions of colour, even if they are beautiful, should be avoided as making too distracting an appeal to the eye.

In general, then, my principle would be the strictest subordination of everything to the dramatic appeal of gesture and voice.

ROGER FRY.

MELODRAMA

PIXERÉCOURT? Does the name say nothing to you, nothing? Once it could fill the theatres of five nations with clapping, crying, laughing crowds. Read Dr. Hartog's * excellent Life of him and you will understand why long ago that name meant so much and means so little now. He is one of those who seem all the more dead because once they were so much alive. Dead notorieties! One has a peculiar tenderness for them. The faint murmur of their fame—listen! you can just catch it. It is sad as the sound of far-off cheering—is soothing to the imagination. There is satisfaction in feeling that the hubbub of life, even at its noisiest, does sink at last into silence. We are solemnly glad that Oblivion should scatter so discretely her poppy. Yet, for my part, when one of these burly stentorian ghosts rises before me, mute now, but with, so I fancy, an even hungrier eye, I feel for him a sympathy I should have denied him as a contemporary. Living, he was something of a nuisance with his path-clearing stride which shoved others, and possibly better men, into the gutter; but now, poor attenuated shade, all the world walks through him, not even knowing he is there. Such a one was Guilbert de Pixerécourt. He belonged to the rustic nobility of France. He was born at Nancy in 1773 and he died at Nancy in 1844, having meanwhile written (he could sometimes manage four acts in a week) fifty-nine melodramas, two tragedies, four dramas, twenty-one comic operas, eight pantomimes, and seventeen vaudevilles. He was, you see, an exuberant man. Melodrama was his forte. Indeed, he was so much a master in that line that some historians of the stage say he invented it; and, to his annoyance—for he would have it his art had an ancient pedigree—some critics in his day asserted this, to whom he replied that his methods were as old as Æschylus. Had not the Greek drama been, in fact, "melodrama," mingling tragedy with pantomime and dance, and heightening emotion by means of music? He claimed that he belonged to the oldest tradition in attempting to kill the bird of art with three stones.

His first play, *The Noble Negros*, was produced a few days before Louis XVI. was beheaded. During the fifteen months when 17,000 people were officially executed, and many more drowned, slashed, or shot impromptu, he wrote intermittently. Never was a populace more devoted to

* *Guilbert de Pixerécourt.* Paris: Honoré Champin. 7 fr. 50 c.

the melting mood; never were generous sentiments more heartily applauded; never did strong mercy, on the stage, rescue innocence with such applause. It is hard to realise this, hard to remember that Robespierre himself was a man in whom a rose could rouse thoughts just deep enough for tears; it is easier to understand that during the Directory and Consulate, the people, sick of violence, should have welcomed the triumphant tribulations and declamatory tenderness in which the plays of Pixerécourt abounded. It was in 1798 that *Victor, or the Child of the Forest*, ushered his great successes. The moment the Peace of Amiens was signed he captured London with *The Tale of Mystery*, accompanied by "some very speaking music by Dr. Busby." "It was the first of those Melodrames," says Genest in his *History of the English Stage* (1832), "with which the stage was afterwards inundated. *The Tale of Mystery* was the first and the best." In Paris his popularity grew year after year. When this "Corneille des Boulevards" appeared in the streets, enveloped in his velvet mantle, wearing his Legion of Honour, men and children, young girls and old men, followed him distantly in silence, or pointed with passionate gestures: "There he goes! The scourge of crime, the great judge who reads the wickedness of the human heart"; while he, head up, with thoughtful brow and lighted eye, passed slowly on amid murmurs of admiration and malediction. He carried, wrote M. Jules Janin upon his death, the idea of his mission upon earth to such a height it would not have astonished him had you compared him to Jupiter of the thunderbolts. "Cantankerous as he was, a traveller from the valley of the shadow of terrors, he had always a jest ready; now he made us weep, now laugh. . . . Many and sincere regrets follow this ingenious man to the grave, who on the evenings of days full of horrors, when the hours of blood were over, knew how to draw sweet tears of pity from an audience by speaking to them boldly of humanity, forgiveness, and virtue."

He was a thick-set, swarthy-looking man with a formidable stare in his light-brown eyes, choleric with sleeplessness and gout. At rehearsal he was a tiger; actors trembled before his exacting ferocity, and the most prodigious efforts on the part of his interpreters never drew from him more than qualified reproach. If he knocked off a drama in three weeks, the time and trouble he would spend upon production were extraordinary. From his works date elaborate stage directions. Instead of, say, "The scene represents a volcano," we read minute descriptions: "The rumble of Vesuvius increases. . . . The falling sparks of volcanic explosions streak the darkness. Arpaya and the bandits retrace their steps, pursued by lava. Women, children, old men surprised by the eruption seek shelter in the ruins. . . . A torrent of lava precipitates itself from the heights on the left into the excavations at the bottom. . . . It overflows and, advancing, floods the main street. An arbutus tree near the tomb shrivels in the fiery flood. . . . The stage is entirely inundated by this sea of pitch and lava. A hail of glowing, transparent stones and cinders falls from all sides. The crimson glow which lights up every object, the terrific noise of the volcano, the cries and agitation . . . all concur to make this frightful convulsion of nature a horrible picture and worthy in every respect to be compared with Hell. (The curtain falls.)." This sort of thing was new then and contributed to the fame of Pixerécourt. In his many historical melodramas he prided himself as much as Irving or Sir Herbert Tree upon historical exactitude; but rolling so romantic an eye as he upon the past, it can be imagined the farrago of incidents he collected. And if he first gave to scenic sensationalism the importance in the theatre it still preserves, his hold upon his generation was even stronger through the overwhelming nobility of the sentiments his characters expressed and the violence of the situations in which they were involved. A witness, questioned by a judge in Paris as to what he had replied to ignoble overtures from the accused, answered that his words had been: "Wretch! so you have never been to *The Gaiety Theatre!* You can have never seen a play by Pixerécourt!" His friend, the romanticist Nodier, affirmed that when *The Dog of Montargis* was on the boards the statistics of crime in France suddenly dropped, and that when the Convention had shut the churches the plays of Pixerécourt had spoken for the dumb pulpits. But the churches were reopened in 1799, only a year after his first huge popular success, and M. Ginisty points out that during the years of his greatest triumphs the police were enormously strengthened; a circumstance which might have inspired, as much as any recollections of the implacable punishments distributed nightly at the Gaiety or the Ambigu, prudent reflections among the criminal classes. The prestige of Pixerécourt may be measured by the fact that a backwash of the enthusiasm excited by *The Dog of Montargis* swept Goethe from his directorship. It had been played in Berlin; it had run through Austria. The Grand Duke demanded it; Goethe refused to permit the classic stage of Weimar to be trodden by a dog, a scruple which, no doubt, his Royal Highness thought excessive from a dramatist who had written a well-known play with a poodle in it.

It is not surprising that the French Revolution should have given birth to the melodrama as we know it. "I write," said Pixerécourt, "for those who cannot read." For the first time they and the barely well-to-do become powerful patrons of the stage.

Now, the essence of the noble drama we call tragedy is that it deals with a moral crisis so violent that, it may be, death is its only solution. It is therefore, as critics have often said, essentially psychological. The words spoken contain it; passions spin the plot; the characters are betrayed by what is within them. Melodrama is tragedy put within the reach of the masses; its methods postulate naivety in the spectator. Its appeal is addressed to those who either have not leisure or capacity to think; to the uneducated, for education is the process of learning to feel things through the understanding. The art of melodrama is to make an audience feel without making any demands upon the understanding. And while the history of noble drama has been the effort to disentangle a theme more and more from the extraneous and accidental, towards simplification of means and concentration upon central truth, melodrama proceeds in exactly the opposite direction. To the uneducated the high morality of the drama appears immoral; in place of it a mechanical or accidental triumph of virtue over wickedness is substituted. The essence of melodrama is that after surprising tribulations innocence should, through the agency of fortuitous circumstances, prove victorious, and bad people come to a bad end. Since it ignores the inward excitement which is the seat of tragedy, it has recourse instead to outward circumstances to stir the emotions. These it exaggerates. It prefers the unlikely; it relies on convulsions, perils, irrelevant comic relief (we cry more easily if we have laughed), improbable coincidences, soft music, startling scenery—upon anything that may astonish or work within us the handle of the pump of tears.

The development of recent melodrama has been away from high moral sentiments towards the catastrophes and ingenious thrills. Drury Lane sets itself to invent every year. Noble harangues are no longer essential; the villain is losing his distinctive traits; the adventures, not the virtues of the hero and heroine are important, and mechanism has almost ousted morality.

Desmond MacCarthy.

We have been prevented at the last moment from publishing the article by Mr. Granville Barker which should have appeared on this page, owing to an Injunction granted in the High Court by Mr. Justice Joyce on Friday afternoon, June 26th.

FRANK WEDEKIND

"DER FALL WEDEKIND," they call it in Germany—"the case of Wedekind"—regarding it, so to speak, in the professorial manner, through peering goggles, as a social enigma or a problem of morbid psychology. Brochures and treatises have been written on the subject; specialists in insanity have given their weighty verdicts; judges have thundered from the bench against the man and all his works; and nobody is a penny the wiser—nobody, that is to say, but the public, which cares little for definition and analysis. The public has laughed and shuddered at Wedekind's plays. It has laughed and shuddered at the same time, for he is a tragi-comedian and a poet.

Wedekind, a playwright renowned among the ignorant for the "advanced" sensationalism of his *Frühlings Erwachen*, as Ibsen was once renowned among the ignorant for the "advanced" opinions of his social dramas, has written some of the most exquisite lyrics to be found in modern German. And in considering his dramatic work this circumstance is not so irrelevant as it may appear. What is wrong with modern dramatists, in general, is that they do not write lyric poems. They have neither the singer's impulse nor the sense of form, neither emotional power nor a love of letters. They cover their nakedness with a bustling intellectualism and a rapid garrulous prose. They incline to the expression of general views, to sermonising, often to sentimentality. An author's talent—even if it be only talent, and not genius—cannot be classified and pigeon-holed: here verse, there prose; here narrative, there drama. His art is one and indivisible. Consider the difference between an Oscar Wilde and a Pinero, a Henri Becque and a Brieux, a Hauptmann and a Sudermann; is it not precisely the difference between a poet and a talker? And, to take a classical example, the only important distinction between Shakespeare and Shaw is that Shakespeare wrote the Sonnets.

Wedekind, then, should commend himself to us from the outset as a singer, although he is no member of the heavenly choir; a disciple, rather, of Baudelaire and Verlaine, a troubadour of the Styx. As for what he is beside, a catalogue would meet the case more fitly than an essay. He is an actor (and a bad one), an adventurer, an impresario, a fanatic, a philosopher (Heaven save the mark!), a satirist, an ex-prisoner (or, as he would say, gaolbird), an educational reformer, a man with a monstrous grievance, and, as already remarked, a godsend to German professors with theories of psychology. For the prosaic aspect of him, he has much in common with Bluntschli, the chocolate-cream soldier of *Arms and the Man*: Swiss birth, a cocksure matter-of-factness, and a mercenary penetration. "Morality," he cries, "is the business for dividends. Morality for my money!" and this with a ruffled indignant air as of one lately ejected from the shareholders' meeting. Like Bluntschli, too, he glories in vulgarity. He writes lines which no actor will speak; he takes the stage to speak them himself; the play is prohibited, and he gives a private performance before some select society; the audience is outraged, and he hastens to compose a lampoon upon it; the lampoon is confiscated, and he proclaims himself a martyr. Of such episodes his public career is composed. He is an outlaw, and therefore he figures as a mountebank.

But, with it all, he is a romanticist. "Real life" does not interest him. He makes no pretence of actuality in his plays, scarcely even of probability. The rare events of existence, so rare that they are generally dismissed as melodramatic—crime, violence, revolver shots, suicide, and sudden death—are the commonplaces of Wedekind's stage. Most frequently he selects fantastic, not to say fabulous, types. He loves a hero, but there is something self-conscious in the choice; his hero must be an adventurer. Further, the witticisms and the epigrams of other "advanced" dramatists are the serious motives of Wedekind's characters. He employs no mere talkers, no Jack Tanners. While other anarchists entertain us with aphorisms, Wedekind lights the fuse of his bomb. He is no great wit; he sets about the bloody work with solemn deliberation.

Take his first play, *Der Kammersänger*, for example. A famous Wagnerian tenor (formerly an upholsterer) is pestered by adoring womenfolk. He finds them concealed behind the curtains and screens of his hotel sitting-room; he drags them out contemptuously and shows them the door. A wildly improbable situation, you observe; but Wedekind treats it seriously, and that is the secret of his comic effect. He has no lightness of touch, and his clowning provokes laughter because it is done with the dignified gravity of a mute. To the tenor comes a 60-year-old operatic composer, with an unsung masterpiece. The old man seats himself at the piano and strums fragments of his opera; the tenor does not listen—he desires to be rid of the nuisance. The old man grows absorbed in the music, transfigured by enthusiasm for his art; the tenor paces the room indifferently. The old man bewails his ill-luck, his poverty; the tenor condoles with him perfunctorily, and declaims against the public's lack of taste. The old man packs up his manuscript and departs; he is scarcely gone when a woman rushes into the room. She is the tenor's mistress; she cannot live without him; she will shoot herself unless he takes her with him on his forthcoming tour. He protests that the thing is impossible; the conditions of his contract forbid encumbrances; a *liaison* depreciates a tenor's value in the market. There follows a dialogue full of sympathy and deep feeling; they speak sincerely, they understand each other. And then the woman shoots herself. This revolver shot sets all the vulgar world swarming in upon them, and reduces the event of her death to one more penalty of fame, one more disturbance in an unrestful afternoon. Waiters, hotel servants, doctors rush to and fro; the police are sent for; and the Kammersänger passes on. He must sing Tristan the following evening; he must rehearse the part; there is no time to be lost. At the end we feel that the Kammersänger is the only person in the play who has a real existence. We have laughed at him, but he is a poignant figure. He has understood them all, all these shadows, from the lady with the revolver to the silly schoolgirl peeping from behind the screen; and he can do nothing to help them.

XUM

More flamboyant are such heroes as the Marquis of Keith in the comedy of that name—a globe-trotter, a man of two hemispheres, an habitué of Parisian night clubs and a candidate for the Presidency of Paraguay; or Karl Hetmann, of *Hidalla*, who founds an International Society for the Breeding of a New Race, taking his mission in desperate earnest, and composes essays on the "Family Life of the Bourgeois Classes as compared with that of our Domestic Animals"; or the ridiculous editor in *Oaha*, which satirises a well-known Bavarian journal. Among heroines there is Lulu of *Erdgeist* and *Die Büchse der Pandora*. In *Erdgeist*, the first part of the tragedy, she is surrounded by men of wealth and talent, sculptors, painters, poets, millionaires, and she ruins them all. A disastrous woman, this Lulu—an "earth-spirit." But her attraction is not altogether physical, and, in so far as he has avoided the banal Salome theme, Wedekind has made *Erdgeist* a play of sinister power. Retribution comes in *Die Büchse der Pandora*, the second part, where Lulu drifts from Berlin to Paris, from Paris to London, until at last she is butchered in a Whitechapel lodging by Jack the Ripper. The first act of this play was originally written in German, the second in French, and the third in English; and it probably marks Jack the Ripper's solitary appearance as a figure of modern tragedy. Truly Wedekind possesses an affinity for the below-stairs spirit of civilisation. One thinks of him sometimes as a dramatist of the *Police Budget*, a lyrical potman. He has the insecurity of the outlaw, and a touch of his furtiveness. Each new play, you feel, is published or performed at the author's risk; it may well land him in gaol. His characters convey the same sense of insecurity: half of them vagabonds and criminals, most of them indifferent to law, convention, decency. And yet this tragedy of Lulu, like the bitter comedies *Der Liebestrank* and *So Ist das Leben*, has wonderful scenes. It is filled with the spirit of the author's lines:

> Glücklich wer gesund und heiter
> Uber frische Gräber hopst:
> Tanzend auf der Galgenleiter
> Hat sich keiner noch gemopst!

And now it is possible to understand *Frühlings Erwachen*, which appears likely to remain Wedekind's finest work. This "children's tragedy" is neither an educational manifesto nor a document of madness. To think of it as either of these is to be deaf to Wedekind's poetry or blind to his humanity. *Frühlings Erwachen* is early work. It is also sincere work, embittered without a suspicion of pose, intimately personal and yet untouched by egoism. The later Wedekind is half inclined to disown the play. He writes:—

> Die sexuelle Psychopathie
> Ich habe sie längst überwunden;
> Und dennoch ich vergess' es nie,
> Es waren schöne Stunden.

Here speaks the malicious prose of the man's nature. But if *Frühlings Erwachen* were only a dramatisation of "die sexuelle Psychopathie"—that appalling Teutonic invention—it would be worthless. The power of the play lies in a childlike simplicity, a sympathy with youth, an understanding of ignorance, and a marshalling of poignant memories such as few men have the imagination to attempt or the courage to achieve. The author lives with his children. He goes to school again with them, sits at the desk, whispers and nudges his neighbour, makes friends, wanders in the woods, exchanges confidences, feels all their shyness, their curiosity, their cruelty. He does not recall the intimacies of his childhood, as most men do, with a kind of shame or distaste. He forgets every "standpoint" of the grown man. He possesses no reserve. And so this drama is full of passages which are repulsive to the cold adult intelligence. It is not a play for the stage; these broken scenes really constitute an epic in dialogue form. Nor is it a play to be described and analysed. One may regret that the subject was not handled by a greater artist than Wedekind; that the children, with their sombre introspection, should be so clearly his children, infant Lulus and Kammersängers and Karl Hetmanns; and yet *Frühlings Erwachen* remains a work of genius. The truth is that Wedekind himself has always been a child. He was born old, but he has never grown up. He prattles precociously of advanced ideas; he pulls a long nose at modern Germany. His logic is the terrible logic of the urchin who wants to know what happened to the Prince and the Princess when they lived happily ever after. His fabulous characters are coloured by the "penny dreadful." He has the furtiveness, and the romance, of a schoolboy breaking bounds. He has alertness and imagination. If he had not also the heaviness of a Prussian grenadier and the pedantry of a Privatdozent, he would be better understood. And there, in brief, is "der Fall Wedekind."

ASHLEY DUKES.

THE DRAMA IN AMERICA

AMERICA, no less than Europe, has felt the extraordinary impulse towards the criticism of life in dramatic form which dates, roughly speaking, from a quarter of a century ago; but America has reacted to the impulse differently and characteristically. That the American drama of to-day is part of the great movement seems to me evident, if only from the fact that the stimulus took just about the time one would expect to cross the Atlantic—that is to say, something like ten years. The new spirit was clearly perceptible in Europe about 1890, in America not until the beginning of the new century. On such points, of course, it is impossible to speak with absolute precision; but I think it may be said that not until after 1900 could the acutest contemporary observer have announced with confidence the beginning of a new era.

It chanced that in 1899 I had an opportunity of examining pretty closely into the state of the American theatre; and certainly I did not discover for myself, nor did anyone point out to me, any very hopeful symptom. There was, indeed, a quite remarkable artist at work. As author, actor and producer, the late James A. Herne had raised to the level of a fine art the "hayseed drama"—the unsophisticated pictures of rural life and character—which had long enjoyed a steady popularity on the American stage. Herne had even felt the naturalistic impulse proceeding from the Théâtre-Libre, and in *Margaret Fleming* had made a somewhat artless essay in realism. But his fine instinct was seconded by no philosophy, and he achieved little more than a quiet and ingenious faithfulness in the reproduction of external and superficial traits of character and manners. I shall always remember his *Griffith Davenport* as one of the most interesting plays, on the hither side of psychology, that I ever saw, and a masterpiece of staging and all-round acting—but the American public gave it the cold shoulder. For the rest, Clyde Fitch was making his early and very crude essays, Augustus Thomas was doing notable work in the portrayal of local manners, and Bronson Howard, near the end of his career, was carrying on the traditions of the French school of the Second Empire. The drama was thought to be perishing under the malign influence of the execrated "Trust"; and as a matter of fact the stage was dominated by managers without culture or ambition,

who greatly preferred speculating in the "tried-out" plays of English and French authors to experimenting with untried American talent. Charles Frohman was the most influential and by far the least injurious of this class. With all his limitations, he was always a sportsman.

Returning to America three or four years later, I was instantly conscious of a change of scene; and since then I have followed the movement practically year by year. Space forbids me to attempt any detailed chronological narrative. I must simply lump together my impressions of ten years.

Setting aside musical farce, "vaudeville," and what are repulsively termed the "movies," one can trace two converging lines of activity in the American drama of to-day: the commercial and the academic. The latter, as being more peculiarly American, may be dealt with first.

In all the leading American universities modern drama is a subject of formal instruction, and Ibsen, Hauptmann and Shaw are studied as gravely as Sophocles and Aristophanes in England. The result is a strong set of undergraduate ambition towards the drama. This is a somewhat factitious, rather too eclectic, culture-movement. America may be said to know too much about the European drama. Star actors of all nationalities drift thither, and there is always a variegated, polyglot fringe to the life of the American theatre. All European developments from Dublin to Moscow may be studied by the curious at first hand, and the absence of censorship permits of the representation all over the country, in the English language, of many plays which are here banned—for instance, *Ghosts*, *Monna Vanna*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Les Avariés*. The result is a sort of cosmopolitanism which is not wholly beneficial to the academic drama. Moreover, the academic dramatist is never lacking in the keen American business sense, and, if he has any real talent, he is apt to be swept into the vortex of the commercial theatre. The academic impulse is nevertheless important and productive of good. Its ultimate fruitfulness no one can predict; but at all events it is creating an educated public, not yet very effective financially, but making itself distinctly felt. Idealistic enterprises, such as Donald Robertson's and Maurice Browne's in Chicago, and a Stage Society recently started in New York, show that there is a keen desire for good drama in the air. One must also reckon as springing indirectly, at any rate, from the academic impulse the curious effort at organising taste which is expressed in the Drama League, a large body of playgoers who appoint committees in New York, Chicago and other great centres to see every new production of importance and issue bulletins "endorsing" those which deserve encouragement. This seems to show a lack of confidence in newspaper criticism, which may or may not be justified. The Drama League, I understand, declines to have anything to do with managers, and is a purely critical organisation. Another society recently founded in New York adds to its critical function that of enabling its members to visit "approved" plays without trouble, and, I think, at a slight reduction of prices. This idea certainly seems to have more grip in it.

Turning now to the commercial drama, one may say that, as a whole, it has become a lively and vigorous branch of American journalism, comic, satiric and sentimental. Thoroughly American it is, beyond a doubt. The import trade, which was booming in 1899, has dwindled to perhaps one quarter of its former bulk. The plays mainly in vogue to-day are light, amusing, bustling pieces, of very small literary pretensions, dealing with familiar aspects of everyday life. This type of play did not, however, arrive all at once. There is a distinct transition to be noted. For three or four years the tendency seemed to be towards grave and sometimes rather squalid realism, with marked survivals of melodrama in its technical methods. This tendency coincided with what was called the "muck-raking" movement in magazine literature—the exposure of political and municipal corruption, trust tyrannies and so forth, which went on busily, and did much good, *consule Roosevelt*. But even these more ambitious efforts seldom took anything like literary form. They were plays of the theatre exclusively, though of a fairly alert theatre, with a keen journalistic eye for the "live" topics of the time.

A very curious characteristic of the American commercial drama is that it uses up its authors with unexampled rapidity. At least three generations of dramatists have blossomed and faded within the past ten years. This is a testimony to a great wealth of dramatic endowment of a certain order, but it is a wasteful and scarcely a healthy state of affairs. I ventured to make this remark at a gathering of the Authors' Club in New York last April, and to ask for an explanation of the phenomenon. A very thoughtful article by Mr. Clayton Hamilton in *The Bookman* for May supplies an answer to my question. In the first place, says Mr. Hamilton,

> Our theatre-going public seems to set a higher value on invention than on imagination. This fact was clearly felt by the late Clyde Fitch; and to satisfy the public craving for invention he nearly always devoted his initial acts to exploiting some novel device of theatrical dexterity. . . . A new idea is most likely to be advanced by a new man. This is probably the reason why the American public prefers the ingenuity of new authors to the matured imagination of writers who have risen above the initial exercise of cleverness. In the second place, it should be stated that the American public goes to the theatre merely to be entertained, and that it finds more entertainment in a shifting of the point of view toward life than in the deepening of the vision of life from an established point of view. . . . A mature playwright, who has grown to take a greater interest in life than in the theatre, is seldom likely to deal with novel subjects or to present them in a novel way.

This is an admirable and very penetrating statement of the case. I fancy, however, that something must be allowed for an influence of a more material order—the fact, namely, that one or two successful plays bring in so much money that one great incentive to industry fails.

It follows from this rapid supplanting of one set of playwrights by another that the total number of men who have made a certain mark within the past ten years must be very large. I can mention only a few names. At the beginning of that period Clyde Fitch was in the full flush of his abnormal productivity. His best plays were drawing-room comedies such as *The Climbers* and *The Truth*, marred by his incorrigible trickiness, but full of real talent. When Mr. Winthrop Ames revived *The Truth* the other day, it was found to have worn remarkably well. It is notable that the American drawing-room drama seems to have died with Fitch. The tendency of the past few years has been entirely towards "shirt-sleeve plays"—studies of business and middle-class life. Another great loss to the American drama was William Vaughn Moody, an academic playwright who made a success with *The Great Divide*, a very much overrated "mariage blanc" play, and then made a failure with a play of striking power and originality named *The Faith Healer*. But for his early death he would certainly have gone far. In *The Witching Hour* Mr. Augustus Thomas, a somewhat older playwright, showed that he was well in the movement, and produced a very interesting drama of the psychical borderland. The most prominent author of what may be called the intermediate generation was Eugene Walter, who made his fame with *Paid in Full*, and followed it up with *The Easiest Way*, an *Iris* writ American. About this time Mr. Charles Klein dealt with police torture in *The Third Degree*, and there was quite a crop of plays treating of political "graft," newspaper

corruption, and similar topics. A young academic playwright of note also appeared in the person of Edward Sheldon, whose *Salvation Nell* and *The Nigger* awakened hopes which he will no doubt one day justify. Meanwhile the fashion for serious, semi-tragic plays, even of the "shirt-sleeve" order, gave place to the unlimited vogue of purely entertaining plays of middle-class life, two of the best examples of which we have seen in London: I mean *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford* and *Potash and Perlmutter*. This school of drama, the George M. Cohan school it may be called, has now maintained its popularity for two or three years, and ought soon to be on the wane. Plays of the Cohan type are often adaptations from the stories and sketches written by the keen and humorous observers of the passing show who abound in American journalism. The appetite for ingenious novelty on which Mr. Clayton Hamilton remarks is exemplified in the success of such a play as *Too Many Cooks*, now running in New York, which depends largely on making the action advance step by step with the progress of a "suburban residence" which is being built for the hero and heroine. In the first act we see the foundations laid; in the second, the house is half finished; in the third it is finished—and to let. This is the sort of thing which unfailingly amuses the public, if it be helped out, as in this case, by a fair amount of humorous observation. Finally it must be noted that, while the rest of the theatrical world is in a state of constant flux, there are two or three play-providers, such as David Belasco and George Broadhurst, who go on, year out year in, manufacturing, personally or by proxy, the sort of article they think best suited for popular consumption. It is an unmistakable sign of progress when we find these caterers supplying distinctly solider fare than they used to deal in ten years ago.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

IT is naturally difficult, if not quite impossible, for me, being closely connected with the Moscow Art Theatre, to try to give a full and complete account of the work and achievements in the art of the stage of this theatre, and so I must confine myself to bringing before the readers of THE NEW STATESMAN merely some historical facts connected with the birth and life of our enterprise and to trying to draw a rough outline of the artistic principles on which its work and researches are based.

The Moscow Art Theatre was born in a period when, although every other form of art, not only in Russia, but all over Europe, was undergoing a strenuous revival, and poetry, painting, drama were being revolutionised, the art of the stage remained stagnant and drowsy in the old traditions of the beginning of the century. Need I add that this period about which I write was the "eighteen nineties"? The Russian Theatre at that time was perhaps in a worse plight than the Western. Only a few decades had elapsed since all kinds of theatrical performances had ceased to be the privilege and monopoly of the State theatres. And, taking into consideration the vast sums of money—hundreds of thousands yearly—that the State, or, more accurately, the Crown, lavished on its St. Petersburg (three) and Moscow (three) theatres, it is quite comprehensible that private competition was nearly out of the question, and that private enterprise merely tried to copy and mimic on a smaller scale the productions of the Imperial stages. In these latter, of course, art, if not entirely absent, was anyway tightly enmeshed in a thick net of red tape, censorial restrictions, etc., although the companies and Advisory Boards of both the Petersburg and Moscow Imperial Dramatic Theatres at the time numbered amongst their members some of the greatest actors and writers that Russia has ever produced. But red tape and bureaucracy, the characteristics of every Russian Government enterprise, which have not died out even now, were then at their worst, and the atmosphere of routine and innate conservatism which prevailed was too strong to be overcome by the small handful of people who saw things in a different light and tried to fight it. One of these few was Wladimir Ivanovitch Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, a prominent dramatic critic and dramatist, director of the Moscow Philharmonic Society's Dramatic School and member of the Repertory Advisory Committee (which chooses the plays) of the Imperial Theatres. He, only as a real writer and dramatist can see, saw too plainly that the Russian stage of that time had quite drifted away from literature—real literature as an art. Nemirovitch-Dantchenko wanted to see Ibsen, Hauptmann, Chekhoff, on the stage, and instead of that the Russian Theatre was drowned in a deluge of ungifted adaptations and copies of the Sardou type of plays. In the same year as the Moscow Art Theatre was founded, Nemirovitch-Dantchenko's play, *The Price of Life*, received the Griboyedov prize, just at the same time when Chekhoff's *Seagull* was hissed off the stage of the St. Petersburg Imperial Alexandra Theatre. Nemirovitch-Dantchenko refused the prize, stating that by right it ought to go to Chekhoff, as his was the real best play of the season. That year the Advisory Committee of the Moscow State Theatres refused Chekhoff's *Uncle Vanya*, and Nemirovitch-Dantchenko resigned from the Board. At the same time, in a rich Moscow merchant family, another man was trying to change the Russian drama. His name is now familiar to all the theatrical world—Constantin Stanislavsky (in ordinary life Constantin Sergheevitch Alexeeff), who started his histrionic career as an amateur, and in the middle of the 'nineties founded the Moscow Society of Art and Literature, out of which sprang later on the Moscow Art Theatre.

These two men, working side by side, in the same town, for a new drama and a new stage, had never met, till one day, June 21st, 1897, Nemirovitch-Dantchenko wrote to Stanislavsky asking him to fix up a meeting. The meeting took place the next day in the big white dining-room of the "Slaviansky Bazaar" and lasted eighteen hours, all through the night till the next morning. And so on June 22nd, 1897, the Moscow Art Theatre was born.

For about a year Stanislavsky and Nemirovitch-Dantchenko kept on organising the new enterprise. A stock company was formed, made up partly of the amateur members of the "Society of Art and Literature," partly of Nemirovitch-Dantchenko's pupils from the Philharmonic Dramatic School, and, in a very small proportion, of professional actors. Most of the members of this stock company are to-day the shareholders of the Moscow Art Theatre, which is run now as a co-operative enterprise; but about that later on. The founders of the Theatre troubled themselves least of all about the financial side of their enterprise. Two or three rich Moscow merchants subscribed a small sum—in all about £2,500 to £3,000—and with a modest capital the Theatre was started. A theatre was leased for a year and the preparatory work begun. At Pushkino, a summer suburb of Moscow, one of the company had a small country house with a big barn in it. This barn was turned into a tiny theatre for rehearsing purposes, and this was the real cradle of the new Russian stage. The work going on was kept very quiet; the company tried to keep away from every kind of advertisement. This was due partly to the modesty of the young company, partly because they were a little frightened by the raillery and sneers that already began to fall on the enterprise from every side, and especially from the Moscow Press,

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which in the beginning was more than hostile to the "fancy" of a "group of rich do-nothings." But notwithstanding, the work went on with the enthusiasm of youth and with an ardent faith. All worked, without any distinction. There were no "stars," no "leaders," no "supers." The future world-famous actors and actresses used to sweep the floors, prepare the meals, wash up, paint and make their own scenery, etc.

In its first productions the new Theatre aimed primarily at breaking all the old, time-honoured theatrical conventions, at conquering that routine which had kept chained for many years all imagination and free creative genius. Of course lots of things were done in the beginning out of a purely youthful inclination to *épater les bourgeois*. So, for instance, the actors very often used to sit with their backs to the audience, not so much because it was absolutely necessary for the action of the play as to affirm their demand for freedom. The same thing with scenery—it was unusual to have trees put up in the middle of the stage; convention used to confine all vegetation to the sides and backcloths; and so in nearly all the scenery of the first productions trees used to grow over all the stage, sometimes even hindering and restraining the actors' movements—but a protest against convention was made. But this youthful protest, this æsthetic revolt against tradition, in no way affected the fundamental, serious æsthetic problem to solve which the new Theatre had been founded: to liberate the stage from convention, routine, to break the chains in which it was dying.

In the course of the summer of 1898, at Pushkino, five plays had been rehearsed and prepared: *Tsar Feodor Ioanovitch*, a seventeenth-century historical play by Count Alexis K. Tolstoy, Sophocles' *Antigone*, Goldoni's *La Locandiera*, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, and Hauptmann's *Hannele*.

On October 14th, 1898, the "Moscow Popular Art Theatre" (as it then called itself) opened its doors with the production of *Tsar Feodor Ioanovitch*, which proved quite unexpectedly a big success, drew full houses, and is still on the Theatre's repertory. *Antigone* and *The Merchant of Venice* were failures, so was *La Locandiera* (revived this spring and now a great success). Financially the outlook was far from being bright and all hopes were piled on *Hannele*, which was expected to be the greatest "draw" for the public. The play had passed both the dramatic and religious censors, the production was quite ready, and the last dress rehearsal was drawing to the end, when a telegram was handed in from the afterwards famous General Trepoff, who was then Chief Police Prefect of Moscow, stating that "by order" *Hannele* was forbidden. The next day Stanislavsky and Nemirovitch-Dantchenko visited Trepoff, who told them that he knew the play well, found no fault in it, "it were well if more of such plays were produced in our theatres," but that he could do nothing, as the interdiction came from the Metropolitan or Archbishop of Moscow. Both the directors of the Art Theatre called on the Metropolitan, who showed them an anonymous letter he had received in which somebody wrote that an old widow on her sickbed had seen a dream in which she was told that "Jesus Christ was being blasphemed on the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre." So that anonymous letter settled the question, and what the censor and the Police Prefect of Moscow could not find need to suppress was suppressed by an anonymous writer. I have brought in this small story to show under what circumstances and what kind of atmosphere the Russian Theatre had, and, unhappily, still has, to work. The suppression of *Hannele* was a great blow to the new Theatre, both financially and morally. And it was with great resentment that the company consented to produce Chekhoff's *Seagull*, which had failed a little while before in Petersburg. But Nemirovitch-Dantchenko was firm in his conviction that only in Chekhoff and through Chekhoff lay the road leading the Russian Theatre to the future. And he was able to awaken this conviction in his friends and helpers. Even though the author himself, who up to now had never had anything to do with the Moscow Art Theatre, tried to stop his play being produced, it was produced, and the first night of *The Seagull* was the night that decided the fate of the Art Theatre and—of Chekhoff as a dramatist. The curtain went down on the first act amidst a dead silence, and it was only when the actors were in their dressing-rooms that the whole house broke into such a roar of applause as Moscow had never yet heard. The actors were called (only a few years later the Moscow Art Theatre stopped the custom of taking calls before the curtain, and now the audiences are asked to refrain from applause) twelve times. The second and third acts had less success. But after the last one the audience stood up as one man and demanded that a telegram expressing its feelings should be at once sent to Chekhoff, who was ill in Yalta (Crimea).

The Seagull made the Art Theatre, and in grateful memory it has chosen as its emblem a seagull, and is commonly known in Russia as "the Theatre of the Seagull." At the same time the Moscow Art Theatre made Chekhoff. Three or four other plays were produced the same season, but without success, and the first year was finished with a deficit of about £4,000. The next five seasons were financially, if not a failure, very far from being a success. The yearly deficits were covered by the same group of rich Moscow merchants, amongst whom most prominent was the late S. T. Morozoff, owner of one of the biggest cotton mills in Russia. Artistically it was one of the most significant periods in the history of the Russian Theatre, as it brought before the public the names of Hauptmann, Ibsen, and Gorky, quite a number of whose plays were produced. Two more plays by Chekhoff, *Uncle Vanya* and *The Three Sisters*, were produced in this period.

In 1902, owing to the generosity of S. T. Morozoff, the Moscow Art Theatre found its new home (in which it still abides) in the Kamergersky-pereoulok, where a former music-hall was turned into one of the most modern and best-equipped stages of the world. Followed two years of artistic and financial good luck. At last the Moscow Art Theatre looked as if it would begin to "pay." Tolstoy's *The Power of Darkness*, Gorky's *Lower Depths*, Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*—the climax of realistic production—brought full houses, and early in 1904, January 17th, came Chekhoff's Swan-song, *The Cherry Orchard*, which was the cause of such a mighty and hearty demonstration on the part of the Moscow public as I have never before or again seen in my life. And then luck turned; in July (the 4th) of the same year, just ten years ago, Chekhoff died. What a moral blow that was for the whole company, with whom now Chekhoff was tied with bonds of profound friendship—and even more closely, he having married Miss Olga Knipper, one of the leading actresses—can easily be conceived. Then followed a second blow—the tragic and mysterious death of S. T. Morozoff, the chief financial supporter of the Art Theatre. The autumn season of 1905 opened with three one-act plays of Maeterlinck—a dead failure—and a new play of Gorky's. And then came the red October Moscow days of 1905, with barricades, shooting, and dead lying in the streets, and the theatre had to close on the eve of a financial crash.

A little sum of money was raised, and the whole company (then about a hundred people) went to Germany, where the tour of the Moscow Art Theatre turned out to be one of its

greatest artistic successes, if not very profitable from the box-office point of view.

The return of the Theatre in the autumn of 1906 to Moscow marks a new turning-point in the ideals and principles of the Theatre. Up to this date the chief feature in all the productions of the Art Theatre had been a fight against old scenic conventions and traditions and the development of a crude realistic drama, an ambition for everything on the stage to be "as near and as like life as possible." But the guiding spirits of the Theatre at last realised that crude realism led the Theatre only into a new *cul-de-sac* as despairing and void as the old-time conventions. The Theatre turned towards symbolism for help, and a series of plays by the Norwegian writer, Knut Hamsun, by Leonid Andreeff and others, were produced on new symbolical lines, every hint at realism being trampled out. But gradually this new road led the producers to a broader and more true method of treating the drama, to that symbolical realism which is now the chief feature of each production and which bases itself not on the spectacular side of the production but on the inner life of the play, on the feeling of its inner substance and its translation by the actor, who is called upon not merely to convey his part to the audience by purely external technical means and tricks, but to work into, or rather "live into," his or her part and use stage technique only as a material and means in rehearsing, but not when the play is ready to be shown to the public. That, of course, does not mean that the Art Theatre has left off experimenting in the different methods of staging. Amongst the most interesting experiments of the last few years one may mention Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*, Gordon Craig's production of *Hamlet* (which took nearly three years to prepare), the extracts from Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamozoff*, which was the first example of a non-dramatic form of literature being produced not in a dramatised version or adaptation, but literally, the dialogue parts being played, and the narrative parts referring to the action being read in and between the scenes, and sometimes interrupting a scene, by a special "reader" from a desk on the side of the stage. This production, which has more than twenty scenes, and is played each time two nights in succession, proved a great success, and the same method was adopted last year in the production of another of Dostoevsky's novels, *Nicolai Stavroghine* ("The Possessed").

The Moscow Art Theatre consists of a stock company of more than a hundred actors and actresses and students of its own dramatic school. Besides there is an orchestra, a choir, and a staff of about a hundred more people engaged in various other departments connected with the Theatre, which possesses its own scenery, property, wig-making shops, and also a second smaller experimental stage, on which the young actors and students give regular performances of plays by young authors.

About five or six years ago the Theatre was financially organised as an independent limited company, not subsidised by the State or by private donations, on more or less co-operative lines, the shareholders being exclusively people practically and directly working in the Theatre, who receive shares after having been employed for a period of from ten to twelve years. Amongst the shareholders are not only actors, but some of the scene-shifters, wig-makers, etc. The Moscow Art Theatre does not pay big salaries, but everybody is paid all the year round (with two and a half months' holidays every year); and as everything in the line of costume on the stage is found by the Theatre, its employees can more or less comfortably live on their pay. In cases when the Theatre goes on tour (as every spring, for six weeks to Petersburg and a fortnight in the provinces) everybody receives, besides travelling expenses, double salary. The yearly expenses of the Moscow Art Theatre (salaries, rents, productions included) rise to the sum of about £75,000, on which yearly there is always now a profit of from £5,000 to £8,000. The system is a repertory one, the only one possible for an up-to-date theatre, and no play, however successful, runs for more than two nights in succession. Three or four new plays are produced every year.

M. LYKIARDOPULOS
(Secretary of the Moscow Art Theatre).

THE CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN THEATRE

A FRENCH critic recently observed, and much to the point, that in all the Parisian theatres of the present day the same play is daily performed, only with different titles. The same witty criticism might, without much difficulty, be applied to nearly all European theatres. I will limit myself, however, to making use of this ironical paradox to try to demonstrate the more or less general characteristics of what we may consider as the contemporary Italian drama.

The modern Italian theatre dates from little more than a hundred and fifty years ago; from the good-humoured, facetious, and inimitable Venetian comedies of Carlo Goldoni, in which echoes the laughter of the last carnival of the glorious and decrepit republic of St. Mark, while the crimson and gold banners of the Adriatic Lion hung limply from the masts of the last galleys, in front of the Riva degli Schiavoni. Such laughter, as that of a person intoxicated with the joy of living and nevertheless serene before the threat of imminent death, echoes even to-day in the Piazzetta, beneath the two columns, and the arches of the stately Procuratie. Goldoni, even though he may fail to satisfy our modern exigencies with regard to strength and intensity in drama, is still the precursor of our short theatrical history, the most vital admonisher of what Italian comedy ought even nowadays to be: witty, serene, and slightly sceptical, yet always a faithful representation of the national and moral peculiarities of our people in the various provinces, both in the country and in the towns. But since Carlo Goldoni, alas! our comedy has lost the sense of our national life, the direct and immediate inspiration from the land, and has followed in the wake of French playwrights. As Alfieri, Monti, Foscolo, and Manzoni are the creators of our tragic drama, which is built up a little too much, perhaps, on the rigid columns of a conventional classicism, so, after Goldoni, we have in Nota, Cavalier Giraud, Giacometti, Interdonato, Castelvecchio, Gherardi del Testa, and others the precursors of the first and light modern Italian comedy: precursors who tend to renew and advance, but who, in renewing, are unduly influenced by the French, and in advancing follow in the footsteps of the same.

The French playwrights of the second half of the nineteenth century thought to demonstrate their superiority by attacking the romantic puppets of the great melodramas of Victor Hugo, and have been only able to give us the works of Scribe, the drama of Alexandre Dumas, of Augier, and of Sardou, a drama based on the formula of the three inviolable and anything but classic units of the modern theatre—the husband, the wife, and the lover—three units which together form a tiresome oblique triangle, from which the conventional modern play seems incapable of detaching itself.

The first traces, of this French influence in the Italian theatre are to be found in a playwright who, some twenty or thirty years ago, legitimately occupied the leading position in the limited field of that theatre. I mean Paolo

Ferrari, a remarkably able French *chef* of our drama, who, gifted with but a slight knowledge of the Italian grammar, but with a far better one of some Parisian recipes—*à la Dumas, à la Sardou*, etc.—succeeded in producing some thirty or more comedies and dramas. Of these, few or hardly any are remembered or acted nowadays: *Le due dame*, perhaps, and perhaps also *Il Duello*, besides that *Marchese Colombi* who, in reality, is but a feeble prototype of Sardou's Rabagas.

After Dumas, and in spite of Sardou, there fortunately came Henry Becque, to show in France and to teach in Italy what possibilities of creation there were, even within the narrow limits of the three before-mentioned units, for a man who, if not of a superior talent, was at least gifted with a more refined artistic and literary taste. Henry Becque, with his drama *La Parisienne*, so subtly, yet so solidly constructed, had shown to the Italian authors a new Parisian pattern on which the new plays might be modelled. Until Becque the plays based on adultery had struggled pitifully in the eternal circle of the *ménage à trois*, in the usual vortex produced by the conflict between love, duty, and right. Becque, on the other hand, makes a distinct advance on this treatment: the *ménage à trois* becomes legalised by habit; the husband takes a secondary place, and it is the lover who becomes the jealous custodian of the peace and even of the honour of the *ménage*. When a new lover, Mr. Simpson, comes into the life of Clotilde Dumesnil, who contends for her with him? Not the husband; but the lover No. 1, Monsieur Lafont, whom habit has made her come to consider as husband No. 2.

With *La Parisienne*, therefore, the *comédie cocuestre* has reached its climax. New and unexpected horizons were suddenly opened to the Italian playwrights. Marco Praga, for instance, one of our best dramatists, shortly after the appearance of *La Parisienne*, wrote *La Moglie Ideale*, his masterpiece. Giulia Campiani is the foster-sister of Clotilde Dumesnil, but a sister, however, much less elegant and frivolous, a much more reposeful and positive character. She feels no attraction for the scent of danger and for the excitement of risk, as the Parisian does: she is content instead with the usual triangular life, and defends with all her might its tranquillity and continuation. She unites in herself the vague soul of Clotilde and the conservative one of Lafont, the lover No. 1. From *La Moglie Ideale* to *La Crisi* Marco Praga has progressed: in originality at least, and in the sober, rough, and crude vigour which is his chief virtue.

Between, however, the influence caused by Becque and that of the plays of Ibsen, Hauptmann, Turgeniev, Tolstoi, and Gorky, we find in Italy a moment almost of truce as regards imitation, a slight sign of a return to the good old tradition of Goldoni; unhappily, or happily perhaps, the dramatic production which authorises us to mention that moment is entirely dialectal. Giacinto Gallina, in fact, the sentimental and exquisite author of *Le barufe in famegia, Serenissima, La base de tuto*, has written these and other plays in his native Venetian dialect. With his death the tradition of Venetian comedy has remained once more interrupted, with the exception of some few interesting plays from Renato Simoni, Amelia Rosselli, and few others.

Ibsen meanwhile had suggested to our playwrights, if not the grey and cold Norwegian atmosphere of his dramas, the necessity of a rebellion against the theatre of France, the necessity of penetrating more deeply into human souls and into things, the necessity of introducing more elevated thoughts into the scenic dialogue.

The instinctive psychological tendency, encouraged by the Ibsenian precedent, induced E. A. Butti to attempt, with his *La Corsa el Piacere, Lucifero*, and *Fiamme nell' Ombra*, the theatre of ideas, *il teatro d'idee*, a very ugly definition of a modern theatrical genre (even this, I believe, of French extraction), which does not signify anything else but a theatre in which there is a fight for the beauty of a thesis, for the fairness of an idea. As if a theatre could exist without ideas!

Together with Butti, but with a greater sobriety of dialogue and with a more refined technical ability, Giuseppe Giacosa has aimed at a like ideal. Giacosa had begun with the sugary mediæval sentimentality of *Una partita a scacchi* and *Il trionfo d' amore*. The Paggio Fernando, who has eyes *tanto belli*, of the first little play, and the Signore di Monsoprano e d' Pennino, the romantic lover of Diana d' Alteno, hero of the second one, have very soon retired into oblivion in their respective gloomy manors of the Valle d' Aosta to make room for more interesting and more real personages. *Come le foglie* and *Il più forte*, the two last plays of Giacosa, as well as *I diritti dell' anima*, are the result of such oblivion and of a salutary excursion into the realms of the "theatre of ideas," although the first two are not the most important works of this author, and although they have brought him his greatest success, *Tristi Amori*, the grey and painful spiritual tragedy of the triangle Fabrizio Arcieri, Emma and Giulio Scarli, is, in its way, a perfect thing: the typical drama, which, together with Rovetta's *Romanticismo*, Praga's *La Moglie Ideale*, and Bracco's *Il Trionfo*, will remain to demonstrate how, and under what influences, our prose theatre has developed in the last ten years of the past century.

After so much drama and tragedy, however, we hear at last in the Italian theatre a hearty if ironical laughter: the laughter which pervades the plays of Giannino Antona Traversi. And it is no matter if we find at the bottom of them some bitter drop of a pessimistic philosophy. This author tells the truth laughing—*ridendo dicit verum*—and does not ask or pretend anything more. From *La Civetta* to *I giorni più lieti*, from *La scuola dei Mariti* to *Il viaggio di nozze*, from *Carità mondana* to *Una Moglie onesta*, the humour and the laughter become slowly a means of criticism, sentimental sometimes and sometimes dramatic, and become biting satire, although discreet and indulgent and good-humoured in its essence. Laughter, criticism, and satire are all, however, stamped with a genuine Italian national wit; and, in their facility and agility a little less than superficial, detach themselves from the superficial irony of the greater part of contemporary French playwrights.

Roberto Bracco is also an ironical dramatist, but there is much more melancholy and thoughtfulness in him than in the former. Bracco has produced, during the last twenty years, some twenty-five or thirty comedies and dramas, several of which, more than in the present industrial age of ours, will be appreciated in the future, when the art of a playwright will no longer be a mere trade. Roberto Bracco is a many-sided dramatist, because no other Italian author and very few foreign ones have been able as he to reproduce and animate on the stage so many sides of our chequered modern life. Bracco is a true illustrator of the most tragic realities of daily life—tender and pitiful, vulgar and ferocious, ugly and infamous realities. *Don Pietro Caruso, Uno degli Onesti, Una donna, Maschere*, testify this. He has been, besides this, an acute sociologist in his dramas *Il Diritto di vivere, Sperduli nel buioz*, and, as far as regards women's rights, in *Tragedie dell' anima* and *Maternità*; and a subtle humorist and psychologist in *Trionfo, La fine dell' amore, Nellina*, and in *Infedele*, that masterpiece of grace and analysis of a woman's heart.

Other names and other titles of plays I ought to quote here (names like those of Rastignac, of Salvatore di Giacomo Corradini, Lucio d' Ambra, Civinini, and others) in order to

make this rapid sketch of the conditions of the contemporary Italian theatre more complete. As I have only wished, however, to give the peculiar characteristics of this theatre, and to trace the main sources of its inspiration and its tendencies, I had to deal with the names and works of those authors exclusively who seem to have been the most representative playwrights in the last two decades. Their works show amply all the weak points of such a theatre, as well as all its noble aspirations. As soon as Italian authors are able to free themselves from the harmful influences of the modern French theatre they are sure to find themselves at last and to give a truer and fuller expression of the much improved national life in their works.

There are already many signs of the revival of the good national energies, even on the Italian stage. I have only to mention the plays and names of Sem Benelli and Domenico Tumiati, not to speak of the imposing work done by Gabriele d' Annunzio, towards the restoration of poetry and fine images and words in the base decrepitude of the modern theatre. These works and these names are, however, those of well-intentioned poets. There are still many critics and men in the street who deny them any theatrical value. My personal opinion would rather be contrary to this, as I cannot imagine any other theatre, except that, to quote Anatole France, either of heroes or else of marionettes.

ANTONIO CIPPICO.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE THEATRE

IT is safe to say that the theatrical industry receives less attention from social students than any other industry of the same size. People who know all about chainmakers, felt-hat makers and match-box makers, newspaper-sellers and checkweighmen, frequently know nothing whatever about the wages, hours and grievances of the numerous and varied classes of persons employed in and about theatres. The actor is scarcely thought of as a wage-worker under the capitalist system, but rather as a romantic accessory stuck on to that system; and the scene-shifter, the theatrical musician and the programme-seller are quite outside the purview even of most of those who take a close interest in the industrial structure of our society.

When talking of actors as a class with habits and mannerisms we often think of them in the bulk; but we are not used to thinking of them as a class economically. We may remark that Cousin Celestine has gone on the stage, and that it is rash of her, as work is hard to get; we may also remark that we recently met Mr. Aucassin Nicolette at tea, that he was a charming man with a beautiful house at Hampstead and a passion for rose-growing. But except to his (often) unfortunate self the actor has not yet become a problem with which statisticians grapple and about which politicians talk. In fact he is inside the Great Machine; in thought he is somehow outside it. He used to be a rogue and a vagabond; he is now considered an adventurous soul who may either do very well or half starve, but who is endowed by nature with such inexhaustible stores of high spirits and philosophic resignation that he will always enjoy life, and land, though sometimes in a shocking bad hat, on his feet. We have always had slight qualms about our conception, and again and again we have shaken our head and said, "Ah, true, true!" when somebody has touchingly remarked that many a merry face on the stage was "the mask of an aching heart." But it has never got farther than that. Though efforts have been made on the Continent towards a general survey of conditions in the industry, no such attempt has been made in this country. We have no materials for such a survey in this place, but a few general remarks on the various classes of theatrical workers may conceivably incite someone else (*e.g.*, a student of the London School of Economics) to follow the matter up.

THE ACTORS.

The number of actors and actresses on the legitimate stage alone amounts to many thousands. The economic conditions of no class are harder to discover; the grievances of none present greater difficulties to the reformer. The profession is very overcrowded, the wages an hour of one individual in the industry will differ enormously from those of another: stars earn their thousands per annum, women with small parts in touring companies get sometimes as little as twenty-five, and men thirty shillings, a week. Conditions in London differ widely from conditions in the country. Employment throughout the whole industry (which is a speculative one) is casual, and combination against the employers does not exist. Let us take as an illustration the case of a touring company in the provinces—and the larger number of theatrical people spend their lives working in such companies. The rank and file in such a company go through experiences which might demoralise a saint. Wages, as we have said, run as low as 25s. or 30s. a week. Miss Lena Ashwell, in her contribution to *Women Workers in Seven Professions*, says "The average yearly income of an actor is £70. From this, £37 may be deducted for travelling and other expenses. . . . On these figures the average weekly earnings of an actor would be 12s. 6d." Rehearsals are not paid for, but if all goes well there may be a long tour with no breaks. But what a life it is even at best for the sweated actor (or actress). He plays perhaps eight times a week. His railway fares are paid for, but he has to provide his own dresses and his own board and lodging. Once, twice or more per week he has to move; most of his Sundays he spends travelling from one town to another; constant moving increases his living expenses; he spends his income on lodgings, frequently squalid and malodorous; and at the end of his tour he has not a penny with which to bless himself. If things do not go well his lot is tragic. He will (keeping himself) rehearse for weeks and then go out with a manager who may possibly have no money and who has booked scarcely any engagements. A week, possibly unsuccessful, is played at A. The manager then comes up (with or without a full week's wages for the company) and says, "We shan't play next week, but you can meet at B the week after, and we shall do a week there." Fares are paid from A to B; but nothing is provided for the actor to get anywhere else for the week and he has to find his own keep until work is resumed. This is common; not so common are the cases in which the manager disappears with the box-office receipts and leaves the players to "walk home to London." But broken tours and short unsuccessful tours are numerous; and, as most managers have not the gifts of Mr. Vincent Crummles, who always puzzled us by contriving to pay his company's salaries, although he usually had (apparently) about 15s. in the house, the results are disastrous. Conditions of employment which compel large numbers of people periodically to sponge upon their relations, borrow, or suffer the hardships of complete destitution, are obviously intolerable in a civilised community. "The profession" is a largely sweated trade; it is a casual trade and it is a seasonal trade. Even the London actor with an assumed reputation and a large fee may be out of work for several months in the year; even his salary is therefore less than the "£——a week" we hear of him drawing; and the salary of the minor man or woman, even where it would be adequate were it regular, is often reduced below a decent wage by this almost constant factor of long spells of "resting." "The average day for

an average actress is one in which she looks for work," remarks Miss Ashwell. The state of the industry is simply chaotic; and the task of reducing it to order will be very difficult.

Means of Betterment.

The normal weapon of industrial betterment, trade-union action against employers, has not hitherto commended itself to the profession. An attempt was made years ago to run an Actors' Union; a good deal of devotion went to its formation, but it was a hopeless failure. Conditions are too complex. The actor of high status often feels nothing in common with the lowlier brother; the provincial "lead" with £10 or more a week does not want to strike for a rise for the sweated individual who doubles several walking-on parts; the "gentleman" actor often does not think of himself as a comrade-in-battle of the trilby-hatted tragedian of Bedford Street; the people in the higher walks cannot, out of sheer decent feeling, contemplate militant action against employers whom they meet daily on terms of intimate friendship. At best, organisation would be very difficult in a casual industry where, moreover, the majority of the workers are always travelling from place to place, and where the margin of potential blacklegs is always very large. But with interests so diverse and conflicting as they are, with grades of employment almost as numerous as individuals employed, and with snobbery and other personal elements coming in to queer the pitch, effective combination whilst the industry remains on its present basis is more difficult still. At the same time, if organisation would be difficult, the effects of organisation might be great, as managers can never welcome a strike in the way manufacturers and mineowners sometimes do. By a strike the theatrical employer can be made to suffer instantly and severely. If snobbish actors would only cast aside their snobbery and pessimistic actors regain their hope, a Union might be formed and worked even without the assistance of the big stars. Actors and actresses who go on the halls frequently join the Variety Artistes' Federation and appreciate its advantages. That Federation itself gave the actors an object-lesson in 1907, when it allied itself with the Amalgamated Musicians' Union and the N.A.T.E., and engineered a strike which resulted in the 1907 Music Hall Award, under which the variety artistes got a standard contract, and rates of pay for the London district were fixed for all sections of musicians and stage employees. For the time the variety artistes were in the Labour Movement and they fought with great spirit. Famous performers addressed open-air meetings from their motor-cars, distributed handbills in the streets, and actively picketed the halls involved, people receiving £100 a week working side by side with poor supers, dressers, and stage hands. After an arbitration disintegration set in, but an example of what combination can do had been provided.

Legislation.

Can legislation do anything? It may do something. The enquiry which was recently held into the Indian Spectacle fiasco at Earl's Court momentarily stimulated public interest in the demand for payment during rehearsals. It is obviously iniquitous that managers should be able to work people for weeks for nothing, especially when only a short spell of paid work may follow. It is notorious also that their freedom to do this leads to grave abuses, for they waste the actors' time, spread the rehearsals over unnecessarily long periods (mixing them up with scenery experiments, etc.), and arrange to hold them at most inconvenient hours of the night. Another tragedy of the Earl's Court kind might possibly generate sufficient public indignation to demand a Bill compelling payment for rehearsals and thus deterring impecunious managers from making rash experiments at the expense of poor and helpless people. Personally one cannot imagine how such a Bill could be framed or worked, though actors talk about it. Proper payment for rehearsals could only be secured as part of a larger Minimum Wage Scheme. One does not see why a Wages Board for actors should be any more inconceivable than a Wages Board for miners. But even that would not decasualise the industry, and until it is decasualised its chief defect will still remain.

Reorganisation.

Casual employment, unrestricted entry into the industry, uncertainty of work in the industry, could only be got rid of by a change both in London and in the provinces, by a change to the system of stock companies. There must be—as is the case in many towns on the Continent—a regular company attached to each theatre, with guaranteed employment. If it be objected that it is boring always to see the same actors, the objection could be removed by the adoption of the circuit principle—a group of stock companies playing in turn at a group of theatres. One form of stock company—the co-operative enterprise of the Moscow Art Theatre—is described on another page of the present Supplement. Elsewhere in Russia the municipality owns the theatre and lets it for the season to a manager with his own stock company. Failure may come, but if it does the municipality will often let the actors take on the building free of rent and make what they can. Finally, and securest of all, we have the State theatres of Russia and other countries where the community pays a subsidy, gives the actors permanent employment, and finally pensions them. To politicians who contemplate treating persons following other occupations in this manner there should be nothing startling in the suggestion that actors have a right to regular, settled, and well-paid employment.

Musicians.

The musicians, and the various classes of "hands" employed about the theatre are in much better case than the poorer actors. Their employment is not always regular; with the exception of a few West End houses, most theatres open and shut constantly. But at any rate a large proportion of these workers are attached to definite theatres and may have long spells of employment in one spot. The less casual nature of the work and the absence of the special difficulties which confronted the Actors' Union have made organisation easier among these, and both the Musicians' Union and the National Association of Theatrical Employees are strong fighting bodies.

Organisation has not been effective for very long. Many musicians were at one time—the employers fostered the idea—proud and snobbish about being artists, and until recently 30s. a week for seven performances was the average salary paid to theatrical musicians, men who had to be capable of playing incidental music, overtures, entr'actes, grand opera, according to the bookings of the management. For an extra matinée one-fourteenth of a week's salary was paid—and such a matinée often entailed attendance at a special performance. Music-hall musicians outside the big West End houses were worse off. In 1907 there was a strike engineered by the temporary "National Alliance of Variety Artistes, Musicians and Stage Employees," referred to above, and in the subsequent arbitration proceedings prices such as 20s., 21s. and 23s. were mentioned as having been paid for two performances nightly. The arbitration secured minimum rates of 30s. and 32s.; rates in twice-nightly halls became standardised. In 1911 another award increased the rates to 31s. and 33s.; and in 1910 it was agreed that overtime should be paid for all hours above 32 a week. There was a widespread agitation in 1913, the musicians demanding

a minimum of 42s. for the twice-nightly halls. As the result of a series of lightning strikes increases ranging from 3s. to 30s. were obtained; and by the end of next year practically all the twice-nightly halls will be paying a 42s. minimum.

OTHER EMPLOYEES.

The National Association of Theatrical Employees—which was founded in 1890 and is affiliated to the Labour Party, the Trade Union Congress, and the General Federation of Trade Unions—caters for all other hands—carpenters, daymen, flymen, propertymen, electricians, nightmen, bill inspectors, dressers, supers, programme sellers, check-takers, cleaners, and so on—employed in and about theatres and cinema halls and in the manufacture of scenery, properties, etc. A brief classified account of these as they were in the 'nineties may be found in Mr. Booth's *Life and Labour*. The recent progress of the Union has been rapid, and last year 3,000 new members were enrolled. We have no space here to give the detailed wages and hours of all the numerous classes involved, but several important advances have recently been made. In 1907 Sir George Askwith made an Award with respect to the London variety theatres; in 1913 the Association obtained a minimum wage of "2s. 6d. a show" for men employed during a performance (being an increase of 6d. "per show" for those employed in a stage department) from almost all the West End theatrical managers; and in 1914 at Liverpool a successful agreement was reached, which it is hoped will be the model for other provincial towns. Managers and Union representatives met in the most cordial spirit and accepted an arbitration award which covered the wages and hours of all classes of employees, and secured from the managers a pledge that they would give members of the N.A.T.E. a preference when filling vacancies, vacancies as they arise being notified to the local branch secretary. The operations of this Union have to be carried on over a large and varied country, and its attack has to be pressed now in one town, now in another, now against one section of amusement-providers, now against another. But its future is full of hope, like that of the Musicians. Only the actors still remain out in the cold of the complete individualist welter. A German authority has recently produced a complete survey of working conditions in the theatre. Can no social student do the same thing for England? Knowledge is a necessary preliminary to sane action.

X.

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